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FISH LINE

Reading the Waters

Vol. 1, No. 2 November 1989

Fisheries Management Plans

As the demands on our natural resources have increased, the general public has become increasingly knowledgeable about resource issues and they have asked to become more involved in management decisions, especially where the decisions directly affect their use of the resource.

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks recognizes the public's interest in fish and wildlife management and wants them to participate in the management planning process. Under a new fisheries management planning process we are asking the public to become involved in the early stages of planning and to share in the development of goals and the strategies needed to reach specific objectives.

In 1987-88 the Department systematically reviewed the major fisheries of the state to establish priorities for the management planning process. Plans have been completed or are ongoing on ten waters, such as Rock Creek near Missoula and the Bighorn River. Plans for additional priority waters, such as the Holter Reservoir, Bitterroot River and Gallatin, will be completed in the next two to three years.

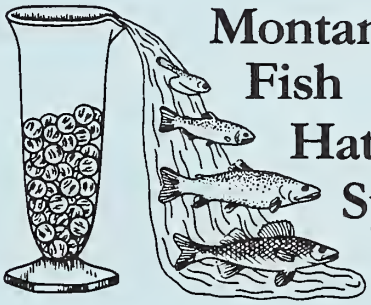
The fishery manager in each region initiates the management planning process by providing a detailed description of the fishery in question, e.g., the numbers and kinds of fish present, the amount of available habitat, the available food base and available spawning areas. These and other data help to define the opportunities and the limitations of fish production and recreational fishing in the areas. The public is asked to help define goals and objectives, as well as concerns about the fishery and is encouraged to suggest potential solutions to problems. Typically, this scoping information is obtained from public meetings, mail surveys and on-site interviews.

Using the scoping results and existing data, the fishery manager prepares a draft plan to describe the fishery and the goals and objectives identified by the public. A list of options or alternatives for achieving different objectives is prepared, along with the pros and cons of each. The draft plan is distributed and the public is asked again to select from among the various strategies suggested. Public response is used to identify a preferred course of action and to prepare a final management plan. The plans are intended to be dynamic with opportunities for adjustment as new information is developed or as demands on the resource change. Most plans are written for a five-year period with the understanding that progress in achieving the objectives will be assessed after that time.

In addition to direct concerns with the fishery, the plans also address other issues pertaining to water recreation, wildlife management and the programs of other agencies. The integration of these other factors will increase in importance as the plans mature and the Department gains experience with this style of management planning.

Missouri River near Hardy, Montana

We urge fishermen and all who have an interest in our fishery resources to become involved and participate in this form of resource management planning. It will require some of your time, but it will benefit the future of your resource.



Montana Fish Hatchery System

Montana's hatchery system consists of nine hatcheries operated by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks located from Eureka to Miles City. The eight hatcheries owned by the Department are: Big Springs at Lewistown, Bluewater Springs at Bridger, Flathead Lake at Somers, Giant Springs at Great Falls, Jocko River at Arlee, Miles City at Miles City, Washoe Park at Anaconda and Yellowstone River at Big Timber. The Murray Springs Hatchery at Eureka is operated under contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Fish from our hatcheries are used to stock waters ranging from small, high mountain lakes to the 245,000-acre Fort Peck Reservoir. Typically, over 500 bodies of water are stocked each year.

Fish reared for stocking include several strains of rainbow trout, Yellowstone and westslope cutthroat, kokanee salmon and several species of warmwater fish. Annually, the

(continued on page 3)

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Montana Fisheries Forum

In July, the leadership of Montana's major sport angler groups met together for the first time. Representatives from Walleyes Unlimited (Scott Ross and Steve Jamruska), Trout Unlimited (Bill Cain and Marshall Bloom) and Montana B.A.S.S. (Steve McGuire and Rick Stevenson) met with Pat Graham and Dennis Workman of FW&P in Missoula. The Montana Wildlife Federation was unable to attend. The intent of the meeting was to exchange information about the structure, goals, and activities of each organization and to identify opportunities to work together in the future. Two opportunities to work together were identified. The first was to increase activities related to National Fishing Week. The second was to support development of an Aquatic/Fishing Education Program.

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) also expressed an interest in National Fishing Week and contacted the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management and received their support. The group concluded that National Fishing Week activities should be coordinated through local steering committees. It was suggested that AFS could coordinate these local committees.

It also was recommended that FW&P conduct an Aquatic/Fishing Education workshop to inform anglers and other groups about programs in other states and to help define what needs to be done for such a program in Montana. Graham said he would pursue this idea.

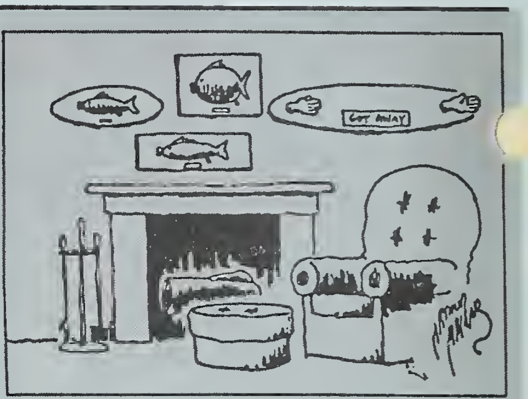
The meeting was deemed a success by the participants, who agreed to meet again next year. Participants recognized that everyone would not agree on all issues all the time, but that they should work together on issues of mutual concern. It may also be significant that this first meeting, held during Montana's Centennial year, was not held to reflect on the past but to design for the future.

If you would like to share your views or offer suggestions, please send them to us at **FISH LINE,** Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Fisheries Division, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

Fish Tales

Q. *How well do fish hear?*

A. Fish don't hear in the same way that mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians do. They have a system of cells on the side of their body that is called the lateral line. These specialized cells perceive sounds and vibrations in the water. They are very sensitive and fish can determine noises or sounds by these specialized cells. Many times they can detect people walking along the bank just by the vibrations their walking causes. This is why you need to sneak up on your favorite fishing hole!



Fisherman Log Program

Montana's Fisherman Log Program was initiated in 1951, the same year the Dingell-Johnson Program (Federal Aid in Fish Restoration) began. Information was needed on species of fish and numbers found in waters across the state. Chuck Phenicie, chief fisheries biologist and Clint Bishop, fisheries project biologist, conceived the idea of having cooperating fishermen keep diaries of their fishing.

In the first year, 350 fishermen kept logs. Today, nearly 3,000 anglers are helping the Department by keeping track of their angling.

Information from the logs has served us well. In the late 1950s, each lake and stream in the state received a water classification as required by the 1955 Water Pollution Act. For some lakes and streams, information from fishermen logs was all that was available. When log holders reported catching trout, the water was classified as suitable for salmonids. Even today, the information from the logs is the only data available on some streams and lakes.

If you are interested in helping the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks by keeping a log, please contact any regional Department office or write to the following address:

Fisherman Log Program
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1400 South 19th St.
Bozeman, MT 59715

We hope to make our next newsletter a joint publication incorporating the annual edition of the Fisherman Log newsletter. Watch for it in January, in a little different format and with additional information from our regional offices.

Hatchery, continued

hatcheries produce about 52 million fish. Of these, approximately 8.5 million are trout and salmon; the remaining are warmwater species, primarily walleye and bass.

To support these operations, eggs are obtained from several sources. The Department maintains three captive broodstock populations: one at Arlee, where most of the state's rainbow trout eggs are produced; one at Anaconda, where the westslope cutthroat trout broodstock is maintained; and one at Big Timber, home of the Yellowstone cutthroat broodstock. In addition, several wild spawning runs are tapped annually for eggs. The Miles City Hatchery maintains a broodstock of largemouth and smallmouth bass to provide fry for stocking.

When we cannot supply our fish planting needs from instate sources, we are assisted from other states and from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In return for their generosity, we reciprocate when we have surplus fish or eggs. Historically, we have sent rainbow trout eggs as far as New Zealand, kokanee eggs to Alaska and New York and grayling eggs to Michigan and Washington.

Throughout production operations, we must assure that fish broodstocks are healthy and remain disease-free. The Department's fish health biologist examines and treats our broodstocks annually and diagnoses fish health problems. In addition to fish health work, the Department maintains its broodstock's genetic quality in a cooperative venture with the University of Montana.

The Montana Hatchery System is as intricate and diverse as the waters we plant. Maintaining a genetically-superior broodstock and planting healthy fish is a charge our hatchery professionals take pride in performing for the angling public. Fish and fish egg requests over the years from more than half of the states attest to the outstanding status our hatchery program has attained.

In future issues of **Fish Line**, we will focus on different aspects of hatchery operations, functions and individual facilities.

Legislative Update HB 707

The most controversial natural resource issue before the 1989 Legislature was HB 707, the water leasing bill. The issue arose primarily as a result of the 1988 drought's impact on stream fisheries. HB 707 was, at one point, rejected by the Legislature but then revived, passed in the closing days of the session and signed by the Governor.

The purpose of HB 707 is to study the feasibility of leasing existing water rights to enhance streamflow for fisheries. As part of the study, HB 707 created a four-year pilot program that allows the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FW&P) to lease water rights from willing individuals. As part of the study process, FW&P, with the consent of the Fish and Game Commission, must provide the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation (BNRC) with a list of specific stream reaches on which leasing is desired. BNRC may then designate up to five stream reaches where water may be leased for instream flow to enhance the fisheries.

Before any lease agreement is made, FW&P must assess the impacts of potential leases on other water right holders on the stream and then seek approval for a lease from DNRC through the existing water right change process. FW&P can only lease water from a willing party. Leases cannot result in the confiscation of water rights and a lease may not be approved until all objections to the lease are resolved. Where FW&P and the water rights holder cannot agree to the terms of the lease, the lease will not take effect.

The maximum amount of water that may be leased from an existing water user is the amount historically diverted by the lessor at his point of diversion. However, only the amount historically consumed may be leased below the lessor's point of diversion.

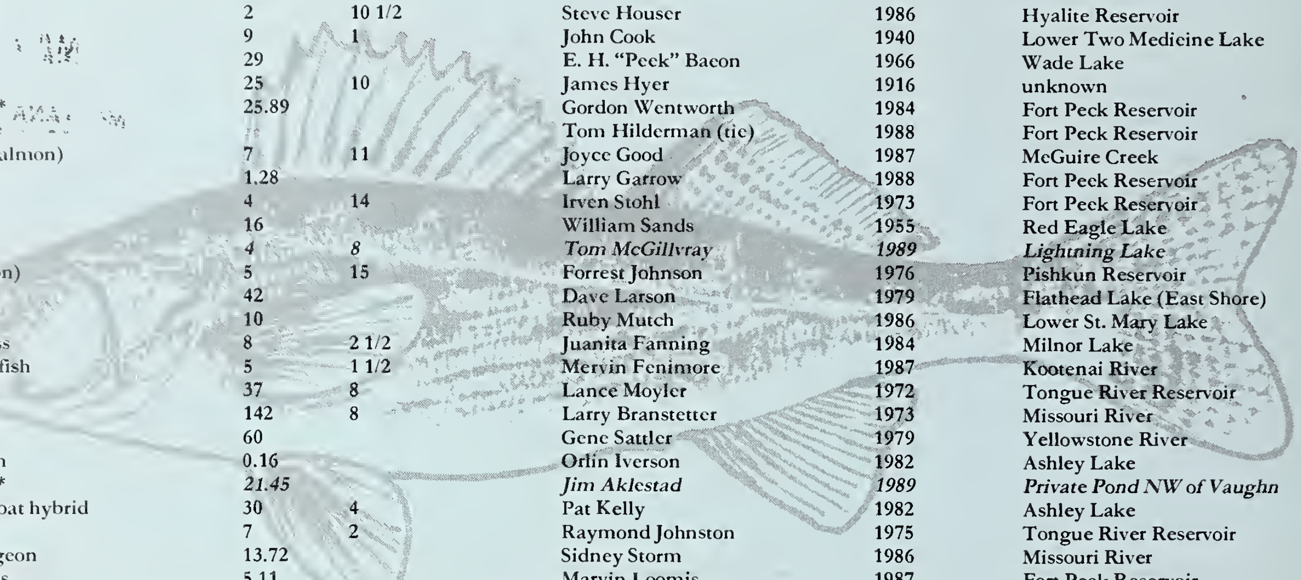
A water lease may not be issued for a term of more than four years but may be renewed for up to 10 years under certain conditions. HB 707 terminates on June 30, 1993. If the law expires without reauthorization by the Legislature, all leases and lease authorizations expire on that date.

FW&P developed criteria for selecting stream reaches and subsequently submitted them to the Commission and BNRC. Criteria were developed for two general categories of streams: (1) Simple streams where the potential success of a leasing program is high and can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time; and (2) complex streams where analysis and implementation of a leasing program will take considerably longer. The principle differences between the criteria for the two categories are the amount of water that would be necessary to augment flows and provide worthwhile benefits to the fishery, and the number of existing consumptive water users who might be affected by a lease. These criteria were approved in July of 1989 by both the Commission and BNRC.

FW&P is currently contacting potential lessors to see if leasing water from them is feasible. If a lease appears feasible, FW&P will contact the other water users in the area to obtain their thoughts on the potential lease. If the reaction is favorable or there do not appear to be significant objections to leasing the water, FW&P will submit a change of use application to DNRC and begin the change process as specified in the current law.

FW&P believes water leasing has good potential for improving streamflows in currently dewatered streams if given an adequate test, and it hopes that a leasing program will eventually help alleviate the severe impacts of low flows such as those we experienced during the drought of 1988.

Game Fish Records for Montana



SPECIES	WEIGHT (lbs.)	(ozs.)	ANGLER	YEAR	LOCATION
Arctic grayling	2	10 1/2	Steve Houser	1986	Hyalite Reservoir
Brook trout	9	1	John Cook	1940	Lower Two Medicine Lake
Brown trout	29		E. H. "Peek" Bacon	1966	Wade Lake
Bull trout	25	10	James Hyer	1916	unknown
Channel catfish*	25.89		Gordon Wentworth	1984	Fort Peck Reservoir
			Tom Hilderman (tie)	1988	Fort Peck Reservoir
Chinook (king salmon)	7	11	Joyce Good	1987	McGuire Creek
Cisco	1.28		Larry Garrow	1988	Fort Peck Reservoir
Coho salmon	4	14	Irven Stohl	1973	Fort Peck Reservoir
Cutthroat trout	16		William Sands	1955	Red Eagle Lake
*Golden trout***	*4*	*8*	*Tom McGillvray*	*1989*	*Lightning Lake*
Kokanee (salmon)	5	15	Forrest Johnson	1976	Pishkun Reservoir
Lake trout	42		Dave Larson	1979	Flathead Lake (East Shore)
Lake whitefish	10		Ruby Mutch	1986	Lower St. Mary Lake
Largemouth bass	8	2 1/2	Juanita Fanning	1984	Milnor Lake
Mountain whitefish	5	1 1/2	Mervin Fenimore	1987	Kootenai River
Northern pike	37	8	Lance Moyler	1972	Tongue River Reservoir
Paddlefish	142	8	Larry Branstetter	1973	Missouri River
Pallid sturgeon	60		Gene Sattler	1979	Yellowstone River
Pygmy whitefish	0.16		Orlin Iverson	1982	Ashley Lake
*Rainbow trout***	*21.45*		*Jim Aklestad*	*1989*	*Private Pond NW of Vaughn*
Rainbow-cutthroat hybrid	30	4	Pat Kelly	1982	Ashley Lake
Sauger	7	2	Raymond Johnston	1975	Tongue River Reservoir
Shovelnose sturgeon	13.72		Sidney Storm	1986	Missouri River
Smallmouth bass	5.11		Marvin Loomis	1987	Fort Peck Reservoir
*Walleye***	*14*	*14*	*Duane Leidholt*	*1989*	*Yellowstone River near Miles City*
White sturgeon	96		Herb Stout	1968	Kootenai River

* New Montana records for 1988
** New Montana records for 1989

Fish and Game Commissioners
***Errol T. Galt**, Chairman*
Gregory D. Barkus
F.W. Howell
Robert Jensen
William G. Stratton

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
***K.L. Cool**, Director*
***Ron Marcoux**, Deputy Director*
***Pat Graham**, Associate Director*
***Larry Peterman**, Acting Administrator*
Fisheries Division

Calendar of Events November 1989 - February 1990

Nov. 9, 1989	Fish and Game Commission Meeting, Helena Set final fishing regulations. Set commercial fishing regulations.
Nov. 30, 1989	Standard stream fishing season closes.
Dec. 15-16, 1989	Fish and Game Commission Meeting, West Yellowstone.
Jan. 17-18, 1990	Fish and Game Commission Meeting, Helena.
Jan. 23-25, 1990	DFWP Fisheries Division Annual Meeting, Whitefish.
Feb. 5-7, 1990	Great Plains Fisheries Workers Association Annual Meeting, Casper, Wyoming.
Feb. 13, 1990	American Fisheries Society Environmental Ethics Seminar, Lewistown
Feb. 14-16, 1990	American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting, Lewistown.
Feb. 23-24, 1990	Fish and Game Commission Meeting, Helena.

Produced by the Helena Fisheries Division of the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

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